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LIBERTY AND ORDER:

REINTEGRATION AS COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN COLOMBIA

Mr. GREGORY E. PHILLIPS, DOS

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SEMINAR N and C

PROFESSOR

COL. DANIEL L. BURGHART and COL. DANIEL E. CUSHING

ADVISOR

DR. GEBHARD L. SCHWEIGLER

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LIBERTY AND ORDER: REINTEGRATION AS COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN COLOMBIA

Introduction: A Land Deformed

Colombia's national motto, "Liberty and Order," reflects an internal struggle. The story of Colombia is the search for a balance between the goals of liberty and order. Today's brutal struggle to define this balance costs some 3,000 lives each month¹. At the same time, Colombia has the potential to assume regional leadership. It holds enormous natural wealth, especially in emeralds and oil. Colombians see themselves as part of the hemisphere's elite.

The United States "has been unable to avoid subordinating its policies toward Colombia to broader regional and global issues," said Robert Drexler, who was Deputy Chief of Mission in Bogota in the 1970s.² As military analyst John Cope asked, "is the extent and scope of U.S. involvement in Colombia commensurate with its importance?"³ The answer depends on six considerations. First, what is the primary U.S. interest in Colombia? Second, what challenges those interests? Third, what is the "center of gravity" of those who challenge U.S. interests? Fourth, what strategy should the United States pursue in Colombia? Fifth, what international and

¹ U.S. Embassy Bogota website, "Remarks by Ambassador Anne W. Patterson at the CSIS Conference, October 8, 2002," accessed October 22, 2002. Hereafter referred to as "Patterson."

² Robert W. Drexler, *Colombia and the United States: Narcotics Traffic and a Failed Foreign Policy*, Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, 1997, p. 1.

³ John A. Cope, "Colombia's War: Toward a New Strategy," *Strategic Forum*, National Defense University: Institute for National Strategic Studies, p. 4.

domestic constraints limit action? Sixth, what ways and means are available to achieve U.S. ends? The latter requires an extended analysis of the military instrument.

U.S. Interests: Negative and Positive

The United States has focused on negative interests in Colombia. Its goals have been those of counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics. The U.S. has committed over \$2 billion to Plan Colombia, the Colombian government's multi-billion dollar emergency strategy to end the narcotics trade. As current U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Anne Patterson has said, "from our standpoint, the main goal of the plan is combating illegal drugs."⁴

Counterinsurgency historically dominated U.S. considerations in Latin America. This became entwined with concerns about terrorism. In 1997, the State Department classified Colombia's major leftist guerrilla groups as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," and added the paramilitaries in early 2001. After September 11, "the fight against terrorism is now an important element of our policy in Colombia."⁵ This shift reflects a logical inconsistency. As Stephen Biddle cautioned, "'Terrorism' ... is a tactic, not an opponent. Declaring a 'War on Terrorism' is like declaring a 'War on Strategic Bombing' or a 'War on Alliances.' As such, it is

⁴ Patterson.

⁵ Ibid..

at once too broad, too narrow, and beside the point.”⁶ Misidentification of U.S. interests as derivative of “global” issues remains, as Cope said, “at the heart of the U.S. conundrum.”⁷

Ambassador Patterson has identified positive interests: “Support for Colombia (is) a capital investment in a long-term struggle.” The U.S. will “help in its efforts to develop economically and to play its proper role in the international community.”⁸ Professor J. Cordell Robinson noted, “until recent years Colombia was often the Latin American country the U.S. could most rely on.”⁹ Colombia’s role is one of partnership with the United States.

America’s positive interests are deeper than its negative interests in Colombia. As Cope argues, the narcotics trade and the insurgencies are symptoms of fundamental weaknesses. Drexler said, “It is those weaknesses and vulnerabilities – social, economic, political, psychological – which ... have first to be addressed and remedied in order to provide a strong foundation for effective, long term suppression of the drug traffickers and guerrillas.”¹⁰ This would represent a reordering of America’s historical priorities in Colombia. The resolution of Colombia’s systemic weaknesses is America’s primary objective, and the elimination of threats from the narcotics trade and insurgency are implied objectives.

⁶ Stephen Biddle, “War Aims and War Termination,” in John R. Martin, Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analysis, Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, January 2002, p. 8.

⁷ Cope, p. 4.

⁸ Patterson.

⁹ J. Cordell Robinson, “Transnational Impact of Colombia’s Insecurity Problems,” in James L. Zackrisson, Crisis? What Crisis? Security Issues in Colombia, National Defense University: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1999, p. 89.

¹⁰ Drexler, p. 113.

The Challenge: Anti-Systemic Forces and Systemic Weakness

The Bush Administration's National Security Strategy first highlighted the threats to the United States: "In Colombia, we recognize the link between terrorist and extremist groups that challenge the security of the state and drug trafficking activities that help finance the operations of such groups."¹¹ Colombia's largest insurgent group, the Marxist *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – FARC), has its roots in the 1950s, when the Colombian Communist Party created it during the period called "*La Violencia*." In 1982, the FARC decided to tax the narcotics trade.¹² The FARC expand its forces tenfold, reaching a strength in 2001 of some 18,000 to 20,000 fighters.¹³ The *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (Army of National Liberation – ELN) followed suit.

There is a debate over whether the insurgents are now common criminals. The title of a Colombian military officer's monograph, "The FARC Cartel," reflects one view.¹⁴ Colombian academic Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez argued that the FARC has not "discarded political ideals in favor of private enrichment."¹⁵ Colombian analyst Daniel Garcia-Pena Jaramillo said, "It is an

¹¹ National Security Strategy of the United States, accessed October 26, 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

¹² Thomas Marks, Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency, Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, January 2002, pp. 3-6.

¹³ Max G. Manwaring, Nonstate Actors in Colombia: Threat and Response, Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, May 2002, p. 5.

¹⁴ Luis Alberto Villamarin Pulido, El Cartel de las FARC, Bogota: Ediciones el Faraon, 1996.

¹⁵ Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez, "Toward an Institutional Collapse?" in Zackrison, p. 16.

important strategic mistake to treat the guerrillas as if they were drug cartels. These two groups have completely different interests and modes of conducting their criminal activity.”¹⁶ Former Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member Roger Noriega argued, “while the popular moniker ‘narcoterrorist’ may overstate the relationship between the guerrillas and drug traffickers, it is clear that a symbiotic tie exists between these illegal groups.”¹⁷

The drug lords who expanded Colombia’s cocaine industry in the mid-1970s sought personal wealth. Drexler said these men “sought acceptance as businessmen engaged in a highly successful export trade.”¹⁸ They invested in local infrastructure to generate support, and thus acceptance. Their political goals were stability for themselves and a free hand.

The so-called “*autodefensas*,” or “self-defense forces,” are a third force. These paramilitaries began as local vigilantes operating against guerrillas. However, in an umbrella organization called the *Autodefensas Unidas Colombianas*, they are now a traditionalist guerrilla movement. Like the FARC, they obtain funds from narcotics and other criminal enterprises. Many charge that they enjoyed tolerance from some government officials.¹⁹

The U.S. National Security Strategy also states positive goals: “We are working to help Colombia defend its democratic institutions and defeat illegal armed groups of both the left and

¹⁶ Daniel Garcia-Pena, “The Colombian Peace Process” in Zackrison, p. 58.

¹⁷ Roger Noriega, “United States Priorities in Colombia,” in Zakrison, p. 113.

¹⁸ Drexler, p. 111.

¹⁹ Pizarro, pp. 17-19.

the right by extending effective sovereignty over the entire national territory and provide basic security to the Colombian people.”²⁰ Cope said the government’s failure to exercise sovereignty throughout the country left vacuums in which illegal groups exercise some functions of government.²¹ Ambassador Patterson defined this interest as “the restoration of government presence and authority throughout the country.”²²

The lack of “national integrity” is due to neglect as much as to weakness. Drexler explains, “the drug traffickers and guerrillas have been able to exploit chronic economic and social problems within their country: rural poverty, insecurity, inadequate health and education services in the vast countryside, weak transportation and communication systems, unbalanced income distribution, unjust taxation practices, and patterns of land ownership which stifle progress.”²³ Marks said, “the marginalized allowed the insurgent movement, FARC, to exist.”²⁴

Center of Gravity: The Direction of Attack

The United States faces challenges in Colombia from three anti-systemic groups -- the leftist insurgents, the paramilitaries, and the narcotics traffickers -- and Colombia’s own systemic

²⁰ National Security Strategy of the United States

²¹ Cope, pp. 6-7.

²² Patterson.

²³ Drexler, p. 113.

²⁴ Marks, p. 7.

weakness. Seeking “centers of gravity” against which to focus policy, many analysts²⁵ have identified narcotics funding. They assert that today’s insurgencies are anachronisms that would fade away without drug money. The drug trade would then fall to classic law enforcement techniques, while the paramilitaries would dissolve without their *raison d’etre*. This is a serious analytical error. The Colombian insurgents, like others in the region, long persisted without drug money. As Cope argued, “no illegal armed group is totally dependent on drug trafficking.”²⁶

Cope, Marks and others identify guerrilla military structures as the “center of gravity,” and conclude that counterinsurgency is key. This neglects the Colombian government’s decades-long pursuit of a military solution. Drexler said “the Colombian military establishment readily accepted its new counter-insurgency mission” in the 1960s, and since then, “Colombian soldiers have been killing other Colombians, and getting killed by them, for some thirty years now.”²⁷ The constant regeneration of guerrilla military cadres indicates the inadequacy of an effort just to do a better job of counterinsurgency operations.

The heart of the matter would seem to be the motivations of the ever-greater numbers of Colombians who live as guerrillas or as contributors to the narcotics trade. Contrary to much American analysis, these motivations are not just a matter of economics. Drexler’s litany of systemic weaknesses points to Colombia’s failure to extend protections and opportunities to all citizens. As Marks said, “what makes it such a difficult and now intractable problem is that it

²⁵ See Marks, pp. 3-8; Manwaring, pp. 4-5.

²⁶ Cope, p. 3.

²⁷ Drexler, p. 84.

has become a creature of more fundamental social contradictions long present in the Colombian polity, in particular a lack of state integration and cohesion.”²⁸ The anti-systemic “center of gravity” is in the popular will. As long as large numbers of people understand Colombia’s motto to mean “Liberty for *them* and Order for *us*,” they will not join a national consensus.

The Policy Environment: Domestic and International Constraints

The international environment includes the complex relations between the United States and Latin America. The phrase “Yanqui go home” reflects frustration at the casual exercise of U.S. power. At the same time, Latin American views of the United States combine superiority, admiration, alienation and entitlement to the (U.S.) American dream. There are also differences in the way each society incorporates the U.S. into its own considerations. Latin Americans are well aware that U.S. military forces have never intervened on the South American continent.

International organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have long played a direct role in Latin American conflicts. North American and Western European NGOs are sources of funds and political support for revolutionary movements. Self-described revolutionary parties in the region also provide each other with political support in organizations such as the Sao Paulo Forum, which includes groups in such varied stages of political integration as the Cuban Communist Party, the legalized former guerrilla groups of Central America, and the FARC. Bilateral ties are also important. Marks noted that the wartime FMLN trained the Colombians in the lessons it received from the Vietnamese. He said, “Strategically,

²⁸ Marks, p. 2.

operationally, tactically, it is the Vietnamese approach” in which “the constant interplay between the political and the military is key.”²⁹ Marks described three stages of simultaneous military operations – guerrilla warfare (including the use of terror), mobile warfare, and conventional warfare – in the “war of interlocking.”³⁰ The FMLN’s role as a model for the FARC continues. Pizarro says “the guerrillas maintain as a strategic view the ‘salvadorization’ of the country. They seek ... a strategic balance to negotiate with the state from a condition of peer equality.”³¹

American domestic constraints on Latin America policy are powerful. Most Americans pay little attention to Latin America, leaving the field open to those with strong views. Members of Congress who were engaged in policy disputes over Central America remain suspicious of military-to-military relations. Human rights concerns play a large role.

Strategy: Reintegration

The primary objective of American policy in Colombia should be the promotion of a strong, stable partner. Systemic weakness, especially the failure of the polity to extend good governance to the entire population, blocks this objective. Anti-systemic threats, including insurgents and the illegal narcotics industry, arose in this environment. Those threats require direct action against them. However, action that does not address the system’s weakness can neither eliminate the threats nor contribute to Columbia’s positive development.

²⁹ Marks, p. 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Pizarro, p. 16.

The strategic framework that will enable Colombia to extend control over its national territory includes the reintegration of insurgent groups. This was necessary for lasting solutions to the hemisphere's conflicts, including El Salvador's. Many analysts misread the latter conflict. James Zackrison said the FMLN's "failed November 1989 offensive to capture San Salvador made it clear that the insurgents could not win the war."³² However, senior FMLN commanders said they achieved their political objective in what they called the "Final Offensive," which they compared to the Vietnamese communist's Tet Offensive of 1968. The FMLN's ability to stage its largest offensive operation of the war without detection and to occupy parts of the capital forced the government to negotiate and induced the international community to reengage.³³

The Colombian peace process has experienced the same fits and starts as others in the region. There have been successes, including the reintegration of the M-19 (*Movimiento del 19 de Abril*) guerrilla organization into the Colombian political system and the legalization of the FARC's political wing, the *Union Patriótica* (Patriotic Union – UP) in 1984. Setbacks included the assassinations of hundreds of UP members, and the FARC's misuse of the demilitarized zone (the *despeje*, or "clearing").³⁴ An important missing element has been confidence that the peace will provide lasting benefits. The United States has the means to provide this element.

³² James L. Zackrison, "Possible Scenarios for Colombia's Future," in Zackrison, p. xxi.

³³ These views reflect conversations with FMLN leaders over four years.

³⁴ See Drexler, pp. 163-164.

Ways and Means: How to Get There

Existing U.S. policy applies a broad range of the instruments of national power to achieving U.S. goals in Colombia. Plan Colombia applies diplomatic, law enforcement, economic, and military means. The ways the U.S. uses these means requires examination.

Diplomacy: Diplomatic means are at the heart of a strategy to achieve America's goals. The lesson of recent successes in El Salvador and Guatemala is that bitter conflicts find resolution in negotiation, and confidence building measures are central to this process. Diplomacy identifies appropriate measures. Peru's constitutional crisis shows what can happen when a country ignores core goals in favor of counterinsurgency and counternarcotics action.

Diplomatic action is appropriate at several levels. At the bilateral level, the United States should encourage the Colombian government to seek reintegration. As Drexler urged, "Washington must avoid being manipulated by those ... who are opposed to the efforts ... to persuade the remaining guerrilla groups to lay down their arms and be reintegrated."³⁵ The notion that guerrillas are permanently beyond the pale is counter to goals of long-term stability.

The second level of diplomatic activity includes the insurgents. If direct contact cannot yet take place, U.S. diplomats should seek close working relationships with former guerrillas who have reentered the system and with political, religious and social figures who maintain contact with insurgents. Such contacts were crucial to the peace processes elsewhere in the region.

³⁵ Drexler, p. 166.

Third, at the international level, multilateral diplomacy can provide impetus to stalled peace negotiations. The United Nations and the Organization of American States have been key players in Latin American peace processes. Individual countries have also made important contributions. As Pizarro noted, “In both the cases of El Salvador and Guatemala, the process was assisted by the mediating presence of the Groups of Friends and the U.N.”³⁶ Colombia itself participated in these “Groups of Friends,” which provided a network of bilateral guarantees to build trust between combatants. The involvement of the international community in the negotiating process solves at least three problems. It provides mediators who suggest compromises that the disputants may not wish to offer unilaterally. It also gives the sides “courts of appeal” to interpret agreements. Finally, it allows the parties to save face with their own constituencies by “blaming” outsiders for necessary but unpleasant concessions.

Law Enforcement: Many have criticized U.S. policy for what Cope calls a “drug-centric policy.”³⁷ As a part of a larger effort, however, the law enforcement element is necessary, if not sufficient. Aerial eradication, destruction of cocaine processing facilities, elimination of tolerance for “small” coca plantations, development and application of effective money laundering laws, training and equipping of Colombian units for counter-narcotics operations, and strict anti-corruption measures remain critical. All of these measures work best in areas of the country where there is a regular, lasting government presence. Law enforcement measures contribute to the larger goal of extending legitimate government throughout the country.

³⁶ Pizarro, p. 21.

³⁷ Cope, p. 2.

A further way of using America's law enforcement means is to continue to reform and enhance Colombia's public security forces. Police reform has been a key component of the peace processes in Central America. The police must operate outside of politics as a professional crime-fighting establishment if it is to contribute to the construction of the Colombian polity. U.S. law enforcement assistance programs, in coordination with those of other countries, can help to develop a psychology of service to the public. United States can also assist the Colombian judicial sector to develop the tools – through modernization and professionalization – to extend the benefits and responsibilities of the rule of law to all Colombians.

Economic Measures: Those who support the insurgency have lost faith that the political-economic system operates under reliable and equitable rules that permit opportunities to all. U.S. economic power can help to improve the political-economic dynamic in Colombia. U.S. trade policy can permit Colombia to benefit fully from its exports of oil, coffee, tropical flowers and precious stones. Equally important is U.S. support for Colombia in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. A less visible approach is the encouragement of a more inclusive business sector. Assistance in developing legal reforms is one element of a policy that promotes a truly free market. The attraction of foreign investment to Colombia can further dilute informal monopolies which restrict new entrants into the business and financial sectors. The United States can also support programs for expanded access to capital through increased micro-finance programs, which provide small loans to high-risk micro-enterprises as a first step into the

formal economy. As Drexler has stated, economic “liberalization ... offers the surest way for Colombia to gain the national strength required to cope with its grave problems”³⁸

Development assistance can boost local economies in marginal areas of Colombia. Infrastructure development provides small agricultural and industrial enterprises the means to market their products. A more controversial program is crop substitution, which seeks to break the dependence of small farmers on coca production. In many areas, farmers have found alternative crops to be unviable. Perhaps the financial counter-incentives to production that regulate crop yields in the United States and Western Europe are applicable. The United States may find it effective to pay small farmers to keep their land out of coca production.

The process of re-integration of combatants in other countries has included land redistribution and financial assistance. Such measures were part of negotiated settlements, and included all combatants. The lesson is that a creative application of inducements and enticements can help to encouraging combatants to consider a future without arms.

Military Power: In the search for peace in Colombia, the effective use of military force is a *sine qua non* – “without which, nothing.” Military action alone cannot resolve the causes of the conflict. However, military force is necessary to dissuade insurgent groups from continuing the conflict. It is crucial that it be the Colombian military, not the U.S. military, which performs this function, because it is Colombian power that counts in the post-conflict balance of power.

³⁸ Drexler, p. 169.

Marks argues that the Colombian military has responded well to the FARC's shift from guerrilla to mobile warfare, and is "a viable counter" to insurgent operations.³⁹ He blames the stalemate on the peace policy and the people's failure to exert "ownership" of the conflict.⁴⁰ However, as Manwaring notes, "contemporary non-traditional conflict with nonstate actors is not a kind of appendage ... to the more comfortable military-to-military paradigm."⁴¹ Effective military operations are necessary, but insufficient, to achieve the objective of national union.

American military assistance should focus on professional advice to Colombian units, training, provision of supplies and funding, and intelligence support. If the Colombian military has responded appropriately to insurgent activities, then American military advice and training can focus on joint operations and the application of technology. Supplies and funding will enable the Colombian military to insurgent tactics of dispersal. Intelligence support can reduce the insurgents' ability quickly to coordinate disparate operations.

Framework for Military Strategy: U.S. Military Deployments?

Ambassador Patterson has said, "We have no intention of sending U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines to engage in combat in Colombia."⁴² One might ask whether the importance of U.S. goals in Colombia now merits deeper military involvement.

³⁹ Marks, p. 18.

⁴⁰ Marks, p. 32.

⁴¹ Manwaring, p. 15.

⁴² Patterson.

Political objectives include the primary goal of the resolving Colombia's systemic weakness in order to permit Colombia to be a strong regional partner. Subordinate objectives are the elimination of threats from the insurgency and the narcotics trade. The Colombian government's goal is the extension of its authority throughout the country. The insurgents' objective is the radical transformation of Colombian society. The narcotics traffickers seek the unfettered production and sale of drugs. The U.S. domestic context features public interest groups with a history of opposition to American involvement in Latin American conflicts. The international setting includes a history of mistrust of the United States in Latin America.

The ***military strategic setting*** involves an asymmetric insurrectionary conflict in which the primary insurgent groups have applied the Vietnamese strategy of a "war of interlocking" of guerrilla, mobile and conventional warfare. The insurgents draw forces from those who do not consider themselves to be part of the Colombian polity. Military operations face the constraints of a dispersed opponent who chooses the style of warfare appropriate to local balances of power. An American military intervention is not appropriate to achieve the political objective of a reintegrated Colombia that has rectified its systemic weaknesses. American military power would check insurgent military operations. However, American military power could not end the insurgency without addressing the causes of the conflict. Moreover, by assuming the military burden, U.S. military engagement would reduce the Colombian military's weight in the military balance of power. Upon the removal of U.S. military forces, the insurgents would have no reason to refrain from conflict.

The *military objectives* of the insurgent forces are Colombia's cities and economic infrastructure. The Colombian government's military objective is the destruction of the insurgency. The center of gravity of the insurgents is the popular will among the disaffected to continue the insurgency. Illicit funds are an important, but not the vital, element of insurgent power. The Colombian government's center of gravity is the popular will to suppress the rebellion. This depends on avoidance of pain from the war. The center of gravity for the United States is popular will to engage in the conflict. U.S. military objectives would be the destruction of insurgent forces and the destruction of key elements of the narcotics trade in Colombia. The endstate in mind is a Colombian polity in which there are no anti-systemic forces. War termination criteria include the surrender of the insurgents or a negotiated settlement.

The *military capabilities and vulnerabilities* of the insurgent forces include an ability to operate with low-technology equipment at several levels of conflict. Insurgent infrastructure and personnel requirements are low. The insurgents can collect intelligence on government activities from sympathizers in Colombian society, and may possess technical means to intercept communications. Insurgent vulnerabilities are the will of combatants to continue the armed struggle if social conditions improve. Vulnerabilities include communications necessary to engage in higher levels of combat intensity and funding for expanded operations. The Colombian government's primary capability is the ability to undercut the rebellion by addressing the causes of the conflict. The Colombian armed forces can apply firepower quickly over long distances, and possess a sophisticated communications system. The Colombian government's vulnerabilities are its inability to prevent guerrilla attacks. The relative balance of forces is asymmetrical. The insurgents have the ability to inflict pain on almost any part of the

Colombian polity, while the government cannot provide absolute protection. The government, with technological superiority, can effectively prevent the insurgents from holding key areas of the country, but must cede effective control over some areas. The types of U.S. forces necessary would include conventional ground troops to exercise control over territory, special operations forces to strike at insurgent rear areas, and air forces to permit rapid deployment and to deliver firepower quickly. The military objectives are not fully attainable by American military power. U.S. forces can check the insurgents' offensive military operations, but cannot prevent guerrilla activity. American military operations cannot affect the popular will that feeds the insurgency. The application of American military capabilities, either in a primary role or in a support role, cannot substitute for Colombian capability in a calculation of the Colombian balance of power.

The *strategic concept* of the insurgents is the Vietnamese model of simultaneous three-stage conflict. U.S. military objectives would begin with actions against the insurgency, and would have as a simultaneous secondary priority the destruction of narcotics installations. U.S. resources to pursue its objectives would be those at the disposal of the U.S. Southern Command. There would be no ability to conceal the overall strategic concept from the insurgents. However, local deception would be possible through effective use of technology. The primary way of using military forces would be offensive, direct and asymmetrical, as the U.S. sought to eliminate organized insurgent forces and headquarters areas. American military power would be effective at the tactical level. However, it would not achieve strategic counterinsurgency goals.

The *potential results* of American military operations would not include U.S. political objectives of the reintegration of the insurgents into Colombian society. The application of

military power would not eliminate the narcotics trade, as the history of the Vietnam conflict shows. The costs to the United States include the loss of life of military members, significant unanticipated budget outlays, diversion of resources from other areas of conflict, and a reorientation of diplomatic activity in Latin America toward defending intervention in Colombia. The risks for the United States are a divisive political debate, alienation of key elements of Congress from the Administration, popular disaffection from the armed forces, the radicalization of the Latin American region, to include the possibility of important Cuban inroads in regional politics, and the alienation of European allies in the face of public opposition to U.S. policy. The mechanism for assessing the effect of U.S. action on the insurgents' center of gravity would be interaction with the population in marginal areas of Colombia. The insurgents would find it possible to defeat the U.S. strategic concept by limiting activity to the lowest level of military operation. The Colombian government would support the strategic concept. U.S. military operations would be counterproductive to U.S. political objectives and termination conditions. The likely outcome of military intervention would be a failure to achieve the desired endstate.

In view of these considerations, Ambassador Patterson's stricture against sending combat forces to Colombia reflects an accurate assessment of the situation.

Conclusion: Spreading Liberty and Order to All

Atop Colombia's coat of arms is a condor with the olive wreath of peace in its beak. Its wings are spread wide and it holds the national motto in its talons. This represents the will to extend the benefits of "Liberty and Order" to all citizens. On the shield are two horns of plenty,

one with coins and the other with fruit, symbolizing the country's great natural wealth. In the center of the shield, on a pole, is a red Phrygian cap, the symbol of freedom. Together, these symbols constitute a noble promise to the future of Colombia.⁴³ But today, drug lords would turn the fruit into coca leaves, and would keep the coins. Insurgents would have the cap of freedom's red symbolize the blood of their countrymen. Still others would have the condor crush the banner of Liberty and Order in its claws, and snap the olive wreath in its beak. Yet, for the people, hope for the future comes from the promise of peace and national unity.

The threats to the United States in Colombia's time of weakness are clear: insurgency threatens regional stability, and narcotics threaten our society. More fundamental, however, and more powerful than either of these threats is the prospect of Colombian national unity. Reintegration of the insurgents, through movement of the "center of gravity" of popular will on which all else hinges, is the strategic bridge to this goal. The means available to the United States to bring this about include diplomatic, law enforcement, economic and military elements of power. An analysis of military strategy shows that U.S. military forces, while crucial to the achievement of strategic objectives in an advisory and support role, should not engage in the conflict lest their involvement make their objective impossible to attain. Only with a clear understanding of the nature of this conflict, and of America's appropriate role in it, can we succeed. As Ambassador Patterson declared, we must help Colombia "to fight a battle that must be won for the sake of their people and our own."⁴⁴

⁴³ Colombian government websites, including those of the Presidency and the Colombian Embassy in Washington, carry pictures and descriptions of the national coat of arms. See <http://www.presidencia.gov.co> and <http://www.colombiaemb.org>

⁴⁴ Patterson.

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